

**Thomas Jefferson to Henry Dearborn, August 28, 1807, from The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.**

**TO THE SECRETARY AT WAR J. MSS. (HENRY DEARBORN.)**

Monticello, August 28, 07.

Dear Sir, —I had had the letter of Mr. Jouett of July 6th from Chicago, & that from Governor Hull, of July 14, from Detroit, under consideration some days, when the day before yesterday I received that of the Governor of July 25.

While it appeared that the workings among the Indians of that neighborhood proceeded from their prophet chiefly, & that his endeavors were directed to the restoring them to their antient mode of life, to the feeding & clothing themselves with the produce of the chase, & refusing all those articles of meat, drink, & clothing, which they can only obtain from the whites, and are now rendered necessary by habit, I thought it a transient enthusiasm, which, if let alone, would evaporate innocently of itself; altho' visibly tinged with a partiality against the U. S. But the letters & documents now enclosed give to the state of things there a more serious aspect; and the visit of the Governor of Upper Canada, & assembling of the Indians by him, indicate the object to which these movements are to point. I think, therefore, we can no longer leave them to their own course, but that we should immediately prepare for war in that quarter, & at the same time redouble our efforts for peace.

I propose, therefore, that the Governors of Michigan, Ohio, & Indiana. be instructed immediately to have designated, according to law, such proportions of their militia as you

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shall think advisable, to be ready for service at a moment's warning, recommending to them to prefer volunteers as far as they can be obtained, & of that description fitted for Indian service.

That sufficient stores of arms, ammunition & provision, be deposited in convenient places for any expedition which it may

be necessary to undertake in that quarter, and for the defence of the posts & settlements there; & that the object of these preparations be openly declared, as well to let the Indians understand the danger they are bringing on themselves, as to lull the suspicion of any other object.

That at the same time, and while these preparations for war are openly going on, Governors Hull & Harrison be instructed to have interviews by themselves or well-chosen agents, with the chiefs of the several tribes in that quarter, to recall to their minds the paternal policy pursued towards them by the U. S., and still meant to be pursued. That we never wished to do them an injury, but on the contrary, to give them all the assistance in our power towards improving their condition, & enabling them to support themselves & their families; that a misunderstanding having arisen between the U. S. and the English, war may possibly ensue. That in this war it is our wish the Indians should be quiet spectators, not wasting their blood in quarrels which do not concern them; that we are strong enough to fight our own battles, & therefore ask no help; and if the English should ask theirs, it should convince them that it proceeds from a sense of their own weakness which would not augur success in the end; that at the same time, as we have learnt that some tribes are already expressing intentions hostile to the U. S., we think it proper to apprise them of the ground on which they now stand & that on which they will stand; for which purpose we make to them this solemn declaration of our unalterable determination, that we wish them to live in peace with all nations as well as with us, and we have no intention ever to strike them or to do them an injury of any sort, unless first attacked or

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threatened; but that learning that some of them meditate war on us, we too are preparing for war

against those, & those only who shall seek it; and that if ever we are constrained to lift the hatchet against any tribe, we will never lay it down till that tribe is exterminated, or driven beyond the Mississippi. Adjuring them, therefore, if they wish to remain on the land which covers the bones of their fathers, to keep the peace with a people who ask their friendship without needing it, who wish to avoid war without fearing it. In war, they will kill some of us; we shall destroy all of them. Let them then continue quiet at home, take care of their women & children, & remove from among them the agents of any nation persuading them to war, and let them declare to us explicitly & categorically that they will do this: in which case, they will have nothing to fear from the preparations we are now unwillingly making to secure our own safety.

These ideas may form the substance of speeches to be made to them, only varying therein according to the particular circumstances and dispositions of particular tribes; softening them to some, and strengthening them as to others. I presume, too, that such presents as would show a friendly liberality should at the same time be made to those who unequivocally manifest intentions to remain friends; and as to those who indicate contrary intentions, the preparations made should immediately look towards them; and it will be a subject for consideration whether, on satisfactory evidence that any tribe means to strike us, we shall not anticipate by giving them the first blow, before matters between us & England are so far advanced as that their troops or subjects should dare to join the Indians against us. It will make a powerful impression on the Indians, if those who spur them on to war, see them destroyed without yielding

them any aid. To decide on this, the Governors of Michigan & Indiana should give us weekly information, & the Postmaster General should immediately put the line of posts to Detroit into the most rapid motion. Attention, too, is requisite to the safety of the post at Michillimacinac.

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I send this letter open to the Secretary of State, with a desire that, with the documents, it may be forwarded to the Secretary of the Navy, at Baltimore, the Attorney General, at Wilmington, the Secretary of the Treasury, at N York, & finally to yourself; that it may be considered only as the origination of a proposition to which I wish each of them to propose such amendments as their judgment shall approve, to be addressed to yourself; & that from all our opinions you will make up a general one, & act on it without waiting to refer it back to me.

I salute you with great affection & respect.